



Photo by Cuauhtemoc Santos | Laredo Morning Times

Justice of the Peace Oscar O. Martinez, center, and Isela Mendez, traffic supervisor for the court, look on as Webb County Commissioner Jerry Garza uses a computer to show how people can use the Internet to pay their traffic fines Tuesday.

JP offers online payment option

By **JULIE DAFFERN**

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Justice of the Peace Oscar Martinez's office will soon accept payments for fees and citations online, and officials hope more precincts will follow his lead.

"We've been asking for it for a long time," Martinez said in a news conference Tuesday. "It's a great asset because we can do things a lot faster."

The online payments will also ease congestion in the office and increase its efficiency, he added.

"You're talking about a tenth of the amount of work," Martinez said. "The court has grown tremendously because the neighborhood has grown."

Webb County Commissioners Court voted Monday to allow the justice of the peace to go through the Official Payments Corporation for the service.

When Commissioner Jerry Garza took office in January, he said one of his goals was to make county government more "convenient and user-friendly."

The online payments process is one of the projects Garza began lobbying for in the hopes of making county government more accessible to Webb County

residents.

"Judge Martinez is a big advocate of technology and moving his office forward," Garza said. "It was a perfect fit for both of us to be able to use this technology."

He also said that Martinez's office is one of the busiest in the county and thus, a good place to pilot the program, which is expected to be up and running within 30 days.

Garza said the website is completely secure and is also used by the IRS and many other governmental entities.

It is also provided at no cost to the county. Users will pay a transaction fee.

"It's a very good deal for the county," Garza said. "We're hoping that other JP's will buy into the process."

The online service is just one of the ways Martinez's office is being modernized with the help of the commissioner. Garza said he will now use money from his discretionary fund to purchase laptops for the office.

"He doesn't know it yet, but by the end of the year I'll wind up with all his money," the judge joked.

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